

U. S. Department of Justice

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Declassified

Authority: 42032 By:
18 Date: 03-25-2015

FEDERAL BUREAU

of

INVESTIGATION

Bureau File Number

Screened By: DB
Date: 03-25-2015
DOCID: 32550469

See also Nos.

CLASSIFICATION NO.

Serials

Volume Number

157-11824
157-11820
JAN



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

In Reply, Please Refer to
File No.

Jackson, Mississippi 39205
January 27, 1970

UNKNOWN SUBJECT;
BURNING OF CLAY COUNTY
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CENTER,
WEST POINT, MISSISSIPPI,
JANUARY 26, 1970

On January 26, 1970, Billy M. Busby, Chief of Police,
West Point Police Department, West Point, Mississippi, advised
a Special Agent of the FBI of the following information:

11-Bureau
1-USA, Oxford
1-OSI, JN
2-MIGp, JN
1-Jackson (157-) (C)
(16)

157-11820-1

[Handwritten signature]

Searched _____
Serialized *ch* _____
Indexed *ch* _____
Filed *ps* _____

Warberg

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Date 1/27/70

BILLY M. BUSBY, Chief of Police, West Point Police Department, West Point, Mississippi, who is aware of the identity of the interviewing Agent, furnished the following information:

BUSBY stated that at approximately 3:00 a.m. during the morning of January 26, 1970, the West Point Fire Department received a fire alarm to the Clay County Community Development Center, which is located on Cottrell Street in West Point, Mississippi. BUSBY stated that the Fire Department immediately responded to the alarm and upon arriving at the scene of the fire discovered that the building was in flames and that the fire appeared to be mostly confined to the second story area of the building. BUSBY stated that the fire was controlled approximately one-half hour later and that the building was gutted on the inside.

BUSBY stated that he has been investigating the matter with the Deputy Fire Marshal for the State of Mississippi and that they had determined that the fire had been an act of arson. *The exact type of material used to start the fire is unknown*

BUSBY stated that one of his police department units reported to him that at approximately 2:00 a.m. on the morning of January 26, 1970, that unit observed JOHN BUEFFINGTON, Director, Clay County Community Development Center, and two other Negro individuals moving boxes of what appeared to be records from the office of the Clay County Community Development Center to an automobile parked in front of the building. BUSBY stated that his officers stated that this continued until approximately 2:15 a.m. BUSBY stated that the fire was thereafter turned in at 3:00 a.m. and when the Fire Department arrived, the building was already engulfed in flames and appeared to have been burning for quite some time.

BUSBY stated that although it is purely conjecture on his part and on the part of the Fire Marshal it was their opinion that the greatest possibility in this matter was that JOHN

On 1/26/70 at West Point, Mississippi File # Jackson 157-

SA BRENT W. WARBERG:jrs

1/26/70

by 2 Date dictated 1/26/70

BUFFINGTON had moved the important records from the inside of the building and was possibly responsible for the fire in the building. BUSBY stated that he had questioned BUFFINGTON and determined from BUFFINGTON that he, BUFFINGTON, had left the building at approximately 2:00 a.m. BUFFINGTON stated that all doors and windows to the building were locked from the inside. BUSBY stated that investigation by his department and the State Fire Marshal's Department reflects that the fire started in the upstairs area near the entrance to the second floor of the building. BUSBY stated that to date they had been unable to determine the amount or kind of materials used to start the fire.

BUSBY stated that investigation conducted by his department has determined many discrepancies in the stories of JOHN BUFFINGTON and the two individuals with him at the Clay County Community Development Center at 2:00 a.m. BUSBY stated that he and the Fire Marshal plan to reinterview BUFFINGTON and the other individuals.

BUSBY further stated that the building which housed the Clay County Community Development Center was not owned by BUFFINGTON, but that BUFFINGTON rented the building. BUSBY stated that he did not have the name of the individual who owned the building. BUSBY also stated that before the building was the Clay County Community Development Center, it was known as the Ebony Lounge and was used as a beer joint by JOHN BUFFINGTON. BUSBY stated that BUFFINGTON was forced to close the Ebony Lounge due to the fact that he was selling beer after hours and also that he was selling beer to minors.

BUSBY further stated that after the fire was put out BUFFINGTON called several news and wire services and reported to them that his office building had been burned down and that the burning was arson. BUSBY stated that because of this he has had numerous inquiries during the day from the various wire and news services throughout the southeastern part of the United States.

stop

JN 157-

3

BUSBY further stated that in the event his investigation turned up any information which would be of value to the FBI, he would immediately make this information known.

UNKNOWN SUBJECT;
BURNING OF CLAY COUNTY
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CENTER,
WEST POINT, MISSISSIPPI,
JANUARY 26, 1970

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F B I

Date: 1/27/70

Transmit the following in _____

(Type in plaintext or code)

AIRTEL

REGISTERED

Via _____

(Priority)

TO: DIRECTOR, FBI

FROM: SAC, JACKSON (157-NEW) (C)

UNSUB;
 BURNING OF CLAY COUNTY
 COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CENTER,
 WEST POINT, MISS.,
 1/26/70
 RM

Enclosed for the Bureau are the original and ten copies of an LHM concerning the above captioned incident.

One copy of LHM has been designated for the USA, Oxford, Miss., one copy for OSI, Jackson, Miss., and two copies for MIGp, Jackson, Miss.

The facilities of the FBI Laboratory were offered to the Chief of Police, West Point, Miss.

In view of the fact that there does not appear to be any violation in this matter under which the FBI has jurisdiction, the Jackson Division is conducting no investigation in this matter. In the event any other information of interest is developed in this matter, the Bureau will immediately be advised.

2-Bureau (Enc. 11) (RM)

1-Jackson

BWW/jrs

(3)

157-11820-2

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